

# BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

## *Vision*

The Board of Public Works exists to improve the quality of life of the customers we serve.

## *Mission*

We are dedicated to providing our current and future customers with utility and other value added services in a safe, reliable, and economical manner consistent with sustainable growth, community involvement, and environmental stewardship.

**Regular Meeting of the Board of Public Works was held in Lewes City Hall, Council Chambers, 114 East Third Street, Lewes, Delaware on Wednesday, August 24, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.**

### **Board Members Present:**

*C. Wendell Alfred*  
*D. Preston Lee*  
*Jack Leshner*  
*James N. Richmann*  
*Candace Vessella*

### **Ex-Officio Members Present:**

*James L. Ford III, Lewes Mayor*  
*Paul Eckrich, City of Lewes Manager*  
*Victor Letonoff, City of Lewes Council*  
*Barbara Vaughan – City of Lewes Council*  
*Darrin Gordon, General Manager*  
*Glenn C. Mandalas, Legal Council*

### **Others Present:**

*Walter Baumer – Severn Trent*  
*Russ Tatman – URS*  
*Henry Evans – Cape Gazette*  
*Joe Hoechner – Resident*  
*Tim Crowley – Resident*

### **1. Welcome, Call Meeting to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

At 7:00 p.m., President Alfred welcomed everyone, called meeting to order and led Pledge of Allegiance. Moment of silence held for our troops and people serving our country.

### **2. Roll Call**

President Alfred stated all Board Members, Mayor James Ford, General Manager Darrin Gordon, and Glenn Mandalas, Legal Counsel are present.

### **3. Revisions and/or Deletions to the Agenda**

No revisions or deletions.

### **4. CONSENT AGENDA:**

President Alfred asked for requests to remove any Consent Agenda items. No requests.

- a) Receive General Manager's Monthly Report.
- b) Receive Severn Trent Report for July. President Alfred referenced Severn Trent Report activity repairs with Tider Electric due to previous malfunction concerns. Walt Baumer replied Tider Electric came once to fix a fiber optics problem; other two times State requested updates involving completion of upgrade.
- c) Receive President's Report. President Alfred mentioned Mayor Ford and Lewes City Council approved the emergency well for Beebe Hospital and BPW General Manager Darrin Gordon will help to achieve goals.
- d) Receive Vice-President's Report.
- e) Receive Secretary Report.
  1. Approval of Minutes dated July 27, 2011. Preston Lee moved to approve July 27, 2011 minutes, James Richmann seconded, and motion carried.
  2. Preston Lee read a note from Ken Mecham to BPW Board expressing thanks for retirement celebration and for gift of canal print.
  3. Preston Lee also read letter from Jim Sleasman, President, Pilottown Village Homeowner's Association, with history of problems asking BPW to review and respond to him. President Alfred agreed.
- f) Receive Treasurer's Report. Jack Leshner presented report; no questions.
- g) Receive Asst. Treasurer's Report.

Hurricane Irene is forecasted to hit northeast coast this weekend. BPW and City of Lewes will work together utilizing State and Sussex County emergency preparedness concerns for appropriate communications with Lewes residents. BPW is preparing with necessary fuel, generators, and equipment for all anticipated emergencies.

## OLD BUSINESS

### 5. It is recommended that the Board accept the current BPW Employee Handbook and its amendments. (D. Gordon)

#### INFORMATION:

Darrin Gordon informed everyone the entire BPW Personnel Policy Manual was presented at the July 27, 2011 meeting. Reviewed with Paul Eckrich, City of Lewes Manager, as directed; there are no changes. Communications between the City and BPW was a concern at the meeting. An official monthly meeting is held with the Mayor, City Manager, and BPW President; more importantly, there is an open door policy with the City Manager with no bottleneck or lack of communications. Paul Eckrich agreed.

#### ACTION:

James Richmann motioned to accept the BPW Employee Handbook, Candace Vessella seconded, and motion carried.

### 6. Open forum/general discussion on the update of the Board of Public Works Communication Plan and Public Outreach. (C. Vessella)

Candace Vessella provided an outline of the update for the BPW Communication Plan and Public Outreach Plan.

1. **Information Papers** as listed under (a) v. are ready for distribution; five identified are: **1.** Why does the BPW flush the Fire Hydrants? **2.** What is the impact of the University of Delaware Turbine on the BPW? **3.** Why do I pay the BPW a Stormwater Charge? **4.** What is the status of the BPW long-term debt? **5.** Why do I pay a "Ready to Serve" Charge? These papers will be uploaded onto BPW website, distributed at public forums where General Manager or Board Members are present, and made available to customers in the monthly bills on September 1, 2011 one item per month. Board is ready to provide information in this format based on questions from BPW customers.
2. **Public Outreach.**
  - a. General Manager is hosting a no-host coffee hour [BPW not paying] on September 27, 2011 from 8 to 9 a.m. at Café Azafran entitled "Ask the General Manager" to introduce the new Community Outreach Papers. Henry Evans, Cape Gazette, was requested to mention appropriately. Future events will take place at other restaurants throughout the Town.
  - b. Saturday, October 8, 2011, BPW will host an Open House in Lewes City Hall in concert with Energy Week with contests, prizes, refreshments, and energy-saving light bulbs.
  - c. Public Appearances. General Manager and BPW Board Members are invited to attend Historical Society Craft Fair on October 1, 2011 from 9 to 11:30 a.m. to a BPW table presenting public information to the community. Mayor Ford consulted with Glenn Mandalas, Legal Counsel, on whether a notice is required when there is a BPW quorum discussing BPW matters. Glenn Mandalas responded anytime there is a quorum discussing BPW business, a notice should be issued. President Alfred so noted and confirmed notice in City Hall is appropriate.
  - d. A Customer Satisfaction Survey will be conducted. Darrin Gordon said BPW hired a firm, SDS, to create a telephone survey taking approximately 10 minutes. Enough people will be contacted to obtain approximately 300 responses to set a benchmark to move forward as the new General Manager. Customers are asked to please take the time to do the survey. Majority of customers contacted will live in the City of Lewes, 10% will be people who own homes in Lewes, and 10% will be non-residents. Candace Vessella is managing effort with some input from a citizen's group.

## NEW BUSINESS

### 7. Open forum/general discussion on the BPW Board and organizational goals. (J. Richmann)

#### INFORMATION:

Candace Vessella submitted goals and ideas pulled from Charter and By-Laws as conversational starting points.

**Lewes BPW Goals "Committed to Quality"** (1) **Safety:** Worker Safety/Customer Safety/Environmental Safety; (2) **Reliability:** Service Reliability/Product Quality; (3) **Cost Effectiveness:** Sound Financial Management Practices/Value to Customers/Reasonable Rates.

James Richmann stated these goals are to assist new Board and new General Manager in establishing priorities. BPW is a governmental organization with the mission of safety for the community. Safety of workers must come first for goals to be achieved correctly. Second goal is reliability encompassing service reliability and product quality as customers depend on reliable and quality service. Third goal of cost effectiveness cannot be approached until safety and reliability are achieved. Cost effectiveness is measured in terms of financial management and value delivered with reasonable rates. The elegance of the three goals as stated is very effective communication.

#### ACTION:

James Richmann motioned to adopt goals as presented, Preston Lee seconded, and motion carried.

### 8. Open forum/general discussion on the review of current investigation in increasing the billing cycle from monthly to bimonthly. (D. Gordon)

#### INFORMATION:

Darrin Gordon amended statement from ~~bimonthly~~ to **semi-monthly** meaning to increase number of billings. Half the customers will be billed in first two weeks of the month and second half will be billed in second half of month. Purpose is to increase cash flow. Research was done through a paper from city of Fort Lauderdale. Increased staffing may be

needed with other significant changes. Investigation is incomplete. Jack Leshner is working on costs and benefits.

**Discussion:**

- Improving turn-around time from reading meters to invoicing [potential increase of \$30,000 to \$40,000].
- Banks send BPW a check for customers making electronic payments [not time effective].
- Cost of in-house billing vs. outsourcing in order to expedite receivables.
- Misconceptions of current billing as done in Philadelphia.

**ACTION:**

President Alfred confirmed Darrin Gordon will continue to investigate the efficiencies of changing billing cycle. James Richmann indicated issues need to be communicated concerning changing commercial and industrial cycles a year ago.

**9. Open forum/general discussion on the addition of a Board Calendar to the board agenda packet and the input of topics. (W. Alfred)**

President Alfred said Board Calendar 2011-12 Agenda Items for Consideration as presented coincides with new budget year. **Changes:** (1) September 2011: 6-month Financial ~~Review~~ **Report**. (2) ~~2010~~ **2012**. Calendar will be available on website.

**10. Open forum/general discussion on the update on the Bay Avenue sewer and water renewal project. (P. Lee/D. Gordon)**

Preston Lee said progress is being made to address everyone's concerns. Board is consulting with Engineers to minimize construction disturbance and impact on residents. Engineers are evaluating costs along with pros and cons for cured-in-place liners in sewers rather than total reconstruction and directional drilling of water main rather than open trench construction. Information should be ready for September 27, 2011 public meeting. Mayor Ford added the September 27, 2011 Street Committee Meeting should wrap up decisions to be forwarded to BPW and City of Lewes allowing process to go out for bid.

**11. Meetings attended by Board Members or Staff.**

Jack Leshner had lunch with Andy Haynie, CPA, for a total overview; he will respond to (1) a specific payroll tax-related question and (2) a financial statement presentation comment needing clarification for Board to present BPW finances appropriately.

Preston Lee attended Street Improvements Committee Meeting last week.

President Alfred indicated everyone received information on upcoming League Meeting and should respond to staff.

Mayor Ford said new DelDOT Secretary will be at kick-off League Meeting; there is a SCAT meeting in September.

**12. Board or Staff Requests for Agenda Item(s).**

No requested agenda items.

**13. Call to the Public**

Barbara Vaughan, Lewes City Council, asked for comments on accomplishments at retreat. President Alfred said Glenn Mandalas' associate gave a very informative presentation on FOIA, Ken Mecham conducted an excellent class on governance, and General Manager Darrin Gordon covered issues on finances, structure and status of BPW and communications within BPW. Discussions were very open and informative.

**14. Call to the Press**

No questions or comments.

President Alfred referenced newspaper article on Tidewater rates for town of Milton.

**15. Adjournment**

Preston Lee motioned to move into Executive Session, Jack Leshner seconded, and meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Recorded by: Rosemary Shannon